PLEASANT TRAGEDIES OF CHILDHOOD

HIS FIRST LOVE AFFAIR

I told Eliza Mary Ann
We'd marry when I was a man
I told her just how glad she'd be
To marry such a man as me.
But now we've quarrelled, guess that I
Will go to war, an' maybe die.

WHEN THE PAINTERS WERE AT WORK

Wasn't it nice of the painter man
To leave this elegant brush and can?
He'd never guess, if he should come,
Just who had been and borrowed some.
Although it partly might explain,
If baby goes and has a pain!

ON THE FARM

Last time we visited the farm
It would've made you laugh;
We thought it really wouldn't harm
To harness up the calf.
I guess we wasn't laughing then—
And we won't try it soon again!

FROM BOX IN THEATRE HELEN KELLER "HEARS" AND "SEES" DAVID WARFIELD

She Enjoyed "Watching the People Come In" to See "The Auctioneer," and After the Performance Discussed With Actor "The Return of Peter Grimm"

THE most wonderful girl in the world sat in a box at the Belasco Theatre and witnessed the performance of her favorite actor, David Warfield, in "The Auctioneer."

At first glance she did not look different from the other well bred, modishly gowned young women whom, conveniently chaperoned, one may count by the score in the fashionable metropolitan theatre audience. To look at her as she sat there in the box, now laughing heartily at the Warfieldian humor, now pushing away a tear at some particular bit of pathos, now rapturously applauding as the curtain fell on each successive act—watching her thus who could divine that she was the wondrous girl the mystery of whose genius scientists and poets alike agree has but one parallel in all time and in all history? Who, not knowing her identity, could dream that the name of this wholesome, up to date and altogether charming young woman is linked reverently by great men of the earth with that of Joan of Arc?

And apparently no one in all that big audience did recognize her or realized that she who responded so readily both to the comedy and to the pathos of David Warfield's art saw and heard it all not through the avenue of normal sense, of physical sight and sound, but by those spiritual antennæ the development of which has made Helen Keller, deaf, dumb and blind, the marvel of the age.

Accompanied by her long since famous teacher and companion of twenty-six years, Mrs. Macy, together with her young girl friend Miss Moore, Miss Keller had arrived in New York after a long lecture tour through the Southern States. Her itinerary permitted but one night's stop in New York, and this one night Miss Keller had, as she herself put it, "consecrated to seeing David Warfield."

"I have seen him in everything else," she wired her manager of the J. B. Pond Lyceum Bureau, "so please have seats reserved for me for 'The Auctioneer.' It doesn't matter where they are—I'll be able to hear and see anywhere in case you cannot get good seats."

An amazing message when one remembers that Helen Keller's eyes and ears are dead, that sound and light are properties of matter with which she has only an academic acquaintance, that all the days of her life have been passed in the appalling darkness which is the inexorable fate of the deaf-blind-mute.

Even more amazing, though, were Miss Keller's remarks when her party, of which the writer was a member, arrived at the theatre. It wanted fifteen minutes before the curtain went up and this interim the blind girl declared she would like to spend in the foyer "watching the people come in."

"It has been so long since I have been to the theatre in New York," she explained, "and I do take such pleasure, on these rare occasions, in catching a glimpse of the gay and frivolous life of you New Yorkers which we read so much about in the newspapers." Here Miss Keller settled herself comfortably on one of the silken divans and her right hand resting lightly in Mrs. Macy's, her left touching Miss Moore's, she proceeded to view the nightly panorama that is enacted there in that brief quarter of an hour before the lowering of the lights.

Just like any other girl to whom the spectacle of a metropolitan theatre crowd is not an every day occurrence, Helen Keller was on the qui vive with wholesome and charming curiosity about innumerable things.

Did any one happen to know who that beautifully gowned woman was? Who was that very distinguished looking man? This party of young debutantes—six, eight, nine, ten, of them, all so shy and fresh and exquisite in the studied simplicity of their gowning—so "jeune fille," as Miss Keller happily put it—were they perhaps some of the "smart set" of society column lore?

These and kindred questions Miss Keller asked as casually as any ordinary girl, and as the answers came quickly, now from Mrs. Macy's finger tips, now from Miss Moore's, her face became the mirror of a thousand fleeting expressions. Indeed, it might be said here that Miss Keller's face gives the impression of being as highly sensitized as a photographic dry plate. On it there are registered shades of expression, fine shades of feeling, which the face of the normal human being is incapable of reflecting.

From a discussion of the passing crowd the conversation drifted to an appreciation on Miss Keller's part of the artistic beauty of the Belasco Theatre, the details of which Mrs. Macy's deft fingers made familiar to her, and then to the topic of "first nights."

"I wish so much," said Miss Keller in a voice so clear and distinct that a passing party of men and women hearing the wish smiled—"I wish so much that I might some time come to a Belasco first night and see 'the death watch,' Diamond Jim Brady and all the celebrities I have read so much about."

Here the deep voiced gong called the party to their box and a few moments later Helen Keller, in company with the rest of the audience, was applauding the entrance of Simon Levi as he stood there in his Hester street shop, a potted Easter lily in one arm, a bunch of cotton umbrellas in the other. When at last the house was quiet enough for Warfield to deliver his first line the deaf-blind girl leaned forward, tense with suppressed excitement, her companions' hands poised ready to communicate the expected words the moment they fell from the actor's lips.

"Here, Moe, mix these cotton umbrelles mit the silk." The words were scarcely uttered before Helen Keller was laughing just as heartily as any other person in the theatre. The entrance of Miss Marie Bates was signal for another burst of applause, during which Miss Keller leaned over and whispered to the writer: "I feel as though I were greeting an old friend—I saw her last in 'The Return of Peter Grimm.'"

The process by which Mrs. Macy and Miss Moore communicated the details of what was going on on the stage was as complicated as it was interesting. The major portion of the labor fell, of course, upon Mrs. Macy. She it was who deftly and swiftly communicated all the passing dialogue, together with the attendant "business," provided the latter did not become too much involved. In which case Miss Moore came to the rescue as a sort of auxiliary. As, for instance, in the latter part of the first act during the hubbub of the auction room scene, or in the Twenty-third street scene of the third act. In both these portions of the play there was an infinitude of detail which it was imperative should be communicated, and with lightning rapidity. For unless one were put in complete realization of all the shifting multiplicity of color, sight, sound and movement of which these scenes are the concrete representation witnessing "The Auctioneer" or any other play were an empty and meaningless function.

To this end, then, at these crises there was enacted in that darkened box a drama such as would stagger the genius of Shakespeare himself even to dream of and in which, as David Warfield said later, no actress in all the world, however gifted she might be, would be irreverent enough to dare essay the role of the heroine. Had any of the surrounding audience been able through the shadowed dimness to descry what was going on they would have now for the first time learned that the girl with the big, wide open blue eyes was deaf and blind. For while the motley throng of East Siders poured into Simon Levi's shop on the stage the faithful women who are Helen Keller's eyes and ears were laboring as few women are ever privileged to labor. There was now, if one may so express it, a certain silent confusion in that particular box. There were quick passages of delicate hands, esoteric lightninglike movements of finger tips and of lips. From one to another of her companions the girl with the big, wide open blue eyes turned, her face at times seemingly anguished lest something escape the eager consciousness of her very soul.

Here the whole East Side is pouring into Simon Levi's little shop. Here's Meyer Cohen, who always gets mad when he plays pinochle, and here's Mrs. Meyer Cohen. The audience is laughing, and Helen Keller would like to laugh but she hardly dares for fear of losing something that is transpiring on the stage, now teeming with such a funny lot of men and women that finally she laughs in spite of herself and almost misses "seeing" her beloved Marie Bates come bustling in. Then, joy of joys, the little German band that Simon Levi has hired to draw his crowd starts up a jolly tune, and forgetting all else Helen Keller pulls her hands away and begins to beat time to the music. The latter she hears, as she explains to the writer, by means of the vibrations that she feels in the air. But she can only afford a moment to this delight. Back she must slip her hands into the palms of her companions and once more get en rapport with the play.

Now David Warfield is beating upon his desk in a vain effort to get that band to stop; Mrs. Eagan is seated and taking a comfortable "forty winks" under the auctioneer's block; the customers are examining the merits of the wares soon to go under the hammer.

Here is fast work for the hands and lips and heart and brain of Mrs. Macy and Miss Moore. Quickly their fingers work as they play upon the hands, the wrists and arms of the girl at their side. But not more quickly than their lips, which Miss Keller touches lightly with her finger tips, sometimes caressing the throat, the eyelids, cheek and forehead of Mrs. Macy—these latter movements being made always when there is much complication of "business" or extraordinary emotional crisis going on in the scene on the stage.

That Helen Keller should respond to the moving pathos of David Warfield's acting is not so remarkable in view of the fact that she has of necessity a highly spiritualized equipment for the sensing of emotion and that Warfield is preeminently a master in the art of transmuting the spiritual into tangible terms of drama. What is more remarkable is the fact that deaf and blind this girl should respond so instantaneously to all the delicate inflections of David Warfield's comedy. Of that highly specialized type of comedy, which he has made so specially his own and with which his interpretation of the character of Simon Levi is so richly overlaid nothing was lost to Helen Keller, who responded to every nuance thereof with a promptness that was positively canny.

It was during the second act, in scene of Simon Levi's gorgeously rated house in Lexington avenue Miss Keller had her heartiest This is the scene where Mrs. Eag Simon congratulate each other the engagement of Helga and Dick Eagan, in whose honor the of the evening has been given in the garish drawing room couple discuss the affairs, and Simon calls his new butler and him to bring a bottle of "Mu tract" the writer is safe in w that no man or woman Belasco Theatre that night so quickly as nor more than did Miss Keller naive addition of the two And when, later in the same scene Eagan has imbibed a little too

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Helen Keller, blind and deaf, "watching" and "listening" to David Warfield. With her are her teacher, Mrs. Macy, and her friend, Miss Moore.

Helen Keller and David Warfield "talking" about "The Return of Peter Grimm."